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" Our right and natural road
is towards the summits "

SRI AUROBINDO

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The Advent

All speech and action comes prepared out of the eternal Silence.

SRI AUROBINDO

The ADVENT

April, 1958

CONTENTS

		Page
EDITORIALS	—*Nolini Kanta Gupta*	5
LETTERS OF SRI AUROBINDO		... 14
SRI AUROBINDO INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY CENTRE	—*Indra Sen*	... 17
THE TEACHINGS OF THE MOTHER (IX)	—*Rishabhchand*	... 32
THE MEETING OF EAST AND WEST AND THE PROMISE OF A NEW HOPE FOR LIFE AND LITERATURE	—*K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar*	... 45
THE TEACHING OF SRI AUROBINDO (5)	—*M. P. Pandit*	... 54
THE LIFE DIVINE (An Outline)	—*N. Pearson*	... 59
REVIEWS:		
INDIENS BEITRAG ZUM NEUEN MENSCHENBILD by Otto Wolff	— *Medhananda*	... 66
THE TALKS OF SADGURU UPASANI-BABA MAHARAJA, VOL. I, by Godama-Suta	—*K. M. J.*	... 73

Do not concentrate on an obstacle; that only strengthens it.

THE MOTHER

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THE ADVENT

The Divine gives itself to those who give themselves without reserve and in all their parts to the Divine. For them the calm, the light, the power, the bliss, the freedom, the wideness, the heights of knowledge, the seas of Ananda. - - - - *Sri Aurobindo.*

EDITORIALS*

How can time be a friend ?

It depends on the way you look at it. It depends on the relation you have with it. If you take it as a friend, it becomes a friend, if you consider it as an enemy, it becomes an enemy.

But perhaps, what you wanted to ask is how to feel when it is an enemy and when it is a friend. Well, when you are impatient and say, "Oh, I cannot get to the end of the thing, oh, when shall I finish it ?" and when you are not able to do the thing immediately and get desperate, then time is your enemy. But when you say, "well and good, I have not done this time, I shall do it next time, and I am sure, one day or another, I shall do it", then it becomes your friend.

* Based on the Mother's Talks

Is time merely subjective or is there something concrete, something like a personality in it?

Perhaps this also depends on how you look at it. All forces are personal forces, all forces of Nature are also personal forces. But if we look at them as impersonal things, our relation with them becomes impersonal. Take for example what has happened just now. If you were a meteorologist, you would calculate the currents of the wind, the pressures of the atmosphere etc. etc. and conclude : "Given all that, what has happened had exactly to happen and there will be so many days of rain and so on"? So it is for you a force which you are obliged to call force of Nature and you can only look at it quietly and wait for the fixed number of rainy days to pass.

But it may happen also that you are in a sort of personal relation with the little conscious beings that are behind wind and storm and rain, behind thunder and lightning and the so-called forces of Nature, which are, however, personal forces; then through the relation you establish a kind of friendship with them. And instead of looking at them as enemies and mechanical inexorables that you have simply to bear without being able to do anything, you arrive at a cordial understanding with them, you succeed in having an influence over them and you may tell them : "But why, you want to blow and pour here, why don't you do it just by the side where there is a field ?"

And I have seen with my own eyes, here and in France and Algeria, the rain falling on a very definite spot exactly where it should rain, because it was dry and there was a field that needed to be watered. And at another place, just a few yards away, it was all sunny and dry, because the place needed to be sunny and dry. Naturally if you proceed very scientifically, they will explain the thing scientifically; but as for myself, I saw it happen as the result of an intervention from someone who asked for it and got it.

I have told you of my experiences in Algeria. Very many

interesting things happened there. For a certain atmosphere was there, an atmosphere, one might say, of a little more real knowledge. There were certain small beings, those that controlled or produced snow. They could come and enter into a room and say : "Now, it must snow here".—"But there has been no snow in this country! Snow? You don't mean that? Near Sahara, it's going to snow ?"—"It must snow, because they have planted fir trees on the mountain and when we see fir trees we come. Fir trees mean we are called and so we come". Thus there was a little discussion and the little beings went away with the permission to snow. The mountain was covered with snow. And it was quite near Sahara. You come down a few miles and you reach the Sahara.

Someone took the fancy of covering the hills with fir and fir is a tree of cold countries. The beings were called in and there they came. All that is true fact, it is not an invention.

Everything depends on your relation. It may be that the meteorologists could explain the thing, explain it away, I do not know—they explain all things in all ways.

Things are as you look at them. That is the truth. I have seen other things also, not so pleasant as the one I have just described. For since men have invented—not invented but discovered things they did not know of, atomic bombs and things worse than that and have begun to do with them like babies, it has thoroughly upset the little beings which lived according to their own rhythm of life and were accustomed to habits that answered to events they could foresee. Now all that is changed and they have suffered in consequence. They have lost their head and they do not know what they do.

There was a time, at the end of the war, when things over there became terribly chaotic and one lived in the absurd and as the unfortunate experience continues, the little beings have not yet been able to come out of their maddening confusion. Yes, they have become maddened. Men play with things of which

they know only the exterior, that is to say, which they do not know at all. Everything may happen, including, alas ! catastrophes that have been foretold long long ago.

That may happen and may not. It depends on the thing that will intervene.

I had once spoken to you of all that, of wind and cloud and rain and I told you to pray if you wanted the weather to change, but I am afraid you thought I was joking.

One thing is certain. It is this. If you are able to see the deeper law of things and if you are in contact with a higher consciousness in order to realise something that is far beyond all human conceptions, why should you be concerned with any human opinion ? Ordinary men have no notion of what spiritual life or divine realisation may be like. Naturally, it is precisely because of their ignorance they come and judge those things quite non-chalantly and advise you as to how you should live and move and act and be. They know nothing, they see nothing. Your attitude towards them should be one of supreme indifference. And yet you should not feel superior to them. On the other hand, you should be kind and wish that they should be reborn in the Light. You should avoid discussing with such people and never try to convince them, that would be a vain attempt. You should be absolutely indifferent, indifferent to their criticisms and indifferent to their praise. You should know it is easier to be indifferent to criticism than to compliments. I tell you a story in this connection.

I have spoken to you more than once of Madame D.N. She was a militant personality and a great Buddhist luminary. When she came to India she wanted to see some of the great Indian sages, Gurus, that is to say, and she went to one of them —I do not give you his name—who looked at her and asked her, as the talk was about Yoga and personal effort and all that, whether she was indifferent to criticism. She answered him in the classical expression : "Does one mind the barking of a dog ?" She added, when she was narrating to me the story, with much humour :

"Happily, he did not ask me whether I was indifferent to praise —for that is much more difficult !"

So, then, you should neither consider yourself superior to others and I shall tell you why; you must know that in a being, human or other, it is the consciousness that matters and you are either conscious or unconscious : you can consider yourself superior only when you are unconscious, the very moment you are conscious, truly conscious, you lose the sense of superiority or inferiority. In either case you must not feel superior, for it is smallness, pettiness; but you must be full of good will and sympathy and care little about what one says or does not say, however, always polite, for it is always better to be polite than to be impolite. In that way you put yourself in relation with forces that are more harmonious and you can fight better against the forces of destruction and ugliness. But in reality you must rise above all that and feel yourself interested only in the Divine, in what He expects of you and in what you want to do for Him, for that is the only thing that counts. The rest has no importance.

How to become indifferent to criticism?

In one's own consciousness one must look at things from a wider, more general standpoint. If at any moment something holds you, holds you tight and you have to face it, if you are compelled to wrestle with a terrible obstacle and at that time you begin to feel that before this moment thousands and thousands of years passed and after the moment yet more thousands and thousands of years will pass, you immediately see the inconsequence of this little point of time; you need not enter into a high spiritual condition, you have simply to contact time and space, with all that is before and all that is after and all that is happening at the time, if you are not an idiot you say immediately: "ah, well, I am giving importance to something that has no importance".

Your little moment loses all importance immediately if you can visualise simply the immensity of the creation. I am

not speaking of rising to spiritual heights, I speak only of the immensity of the creation in time and space and the small event on which you are concentrated as if it were of great consequence. All that dissolves immediately if you go about the thing in a sincere spirit. Naturally there is a part in you that will protest and say, "But for me it has an importance". You have only to leave it aside and go on with the other part of light and consciousness. If you are sincere there it is not difficult.

There are other procedures. A Chinese sage, I read out to you once, advises you to lie down on the flow of events as on a plank in the ocean, and imagine yourself to be on the vast immensity, drifting upon the waves, contemplating the sky above. In Chinese they call it Wu Wei. When you can do that all trouble disappears.

I knew one Irishman who used to lie on his back and look up to the sky in the night when there were stars. He looked, contemplated on the sky, imagined as if he was floating in this immensity studded with countless luminous points and immediately he felt all his troubles were gone. There are many such ways. What you have to do is to get the sense of relativity, your little person and the importance you attach to things concerning you as against the boundless infinity of the universe. Naturally there is the other way of separating yourself from the earthly consciousness and rising into a higher consciousness, there earthly things take their true place, that is to say, they become small things.

30-11-1955

The Modern Taste

From the standpoint of artistic and literary taste and culture, the present world is a thing of extremes. On one side, it is trying hard to discover something very noble, and on the other, it is sinking into a vulgarity which is infinitely greater than the vulgarity, say, of two or three centuries ago. In those times people who were not cultured were crude, but the crudeness resembled the crudeness of animals and had not much perversion in it—

there was something certainly, for as soon as the mind appears, perversion also comes in. But in our days, what does not rise to the peak, remains on level earth, is a crudeness of the most perverted kind; that is to say, it is not only ignorant or stupid, it is ugly, dirty, repulsive, it is deformed, it is wicked, it is extremely low. What makes it so is the wrong use of the mind. If there were no mind, this perversion would not exist. Now what is ugly is ugly from all points of view.

There are things that are considered beautiful these days. I have seen photographs and reproductions which are frightfully vulgar in the perverted sense, and yet people are uproarious about them and find them pretty. That means there is something there which has not only no culture and development, but has developed in the wrong way, that is to say, is deformed, which is worse, for it is much more difficult to straighten a perverted and deformed object than to enlighten that which is merely ignorant or without education.

I believe there are certain things that have become great instruments of perversion and among them I name the Cinema. The Cinema could have been, and I hope one day it will be, an instrument of education and culture. But for the moment it is largely an instrument of perversion, of a truly hideous perversion : perversion of taste, perversion of consciousness, a moral and even a physical ugliness. And yet it is something which can be serviceable for education, for progress, for artistic culture and growth. It can be made a means for the spread of the sense of the beautiful and the creation of things beautiful in a way much more general and accessible to all than it was possible in the older methods. But what could have been better, is not better but has become worse.

As I said, we are in a period of excesses ; we move from one excess to another. If it is not an excess of zeal towards perfection, we fall back into the opposite excess of perversion. As we live in the midst of such a world, if we carefully note we shall find that we automatically share in the universal vulgarism, unless we

are watchful over ourselves and bring down into our being the light of our highest consciousness ; at every step we run the risk of grave errors of taste, in matters spiritual also.

7-9-1955

The Mother on Herself

(1)

When I look at people and when I am occupied with them, I have the will—I do not say it is always possible—anyhow, I have the will to see in them their psychic being, their ideal, what they want to do, what they want to become, to hold it and bring it out to the surface. That is all my work. What I see I try to draw to the front. When I do this, apart from a very few instances when people are somewhat conscious, I am not always sure of the kind and degree of their external consciousness. And when I put questions to someone, it is to know the difference between what he is conscious of and what I see. I am doing this all the while. And that is why I seem as if I did not know.

There is a vast difference between what you know of yourself and what I know of you. What I know of you is evidently what you ought to become. Your external being one can see very well. But between that and the inner being that I see there is the vital-mental region which is the most important thing from the human point of view ; for what one has to become must be shaped there first, if it is to be materialised. But as I say, the gap is wide between what you know of yourself, what is actively conscious in you and what you are in the truth of your being. This intermediary region is somewhat difficult for me, so to say, to be familiar with or comprehend : for it is a cloudy region for me, a domain of falsehood. You must note the distinction between a lie and a falsehood. A lie is that which is altogether unreal, which has not been, which is not there. A falsehood is that which is not true, in the sense that it is not the expression of your truth—in no way—and yet, it is of that you are for the most part externally conscious. Very few are there

that have the inner perception of what they want to become, what they want to do, what the truth of their being is. There are not many of that kind. For some, the thing comes and is then veiled—just a lightning flash for a moment and then all is dark. It is a perpetual question for me to know what is the state of the superficial consciousness which appears so unreal, so untrue to me.

There is such a contradiction between the brutal fact of the daily activity and this image I make to myself of what every one of you should be : I keep this image always intact by all the power of my consciousness so that you may realise it. That is yourself, your own self. It is not this ignorant, stupid, insincere, dishonest being that you call yourself.

9-6-1954

(2)

Once upon a time, long long ago, when I was in Paris, I used to see Madame D.N. almost daily. She was full of ideas, she told me once : "You should not think of action, it means attachment for action. When you want to do something, it indicates that you are still tied to the things of the world". I answered : "No, nothing is more easy. You have only to imagine all that has been done before, all that will be done hereafter and all that is being done now, you will immediately perceive that your action is nothing but a breath, one second in eternity and you are no longer attached to it". I did not know the exact text of the Gita at that time. I had not the text that I am now putting in my own way: "And detached from the fruit of action, act". I did not know the Gita, but what I said was in effect what the Gita taught. You should act not because you believe in your action. You act because you should act. That is all. It is however a condition that may prove dangerous sometimes. For instead of willing with a sovereign will to action you simply look and let things happen.

30-11-1955

NOLINI KANTA GUPTA

IT was not because of any fault of yours that the Mother gave only a short blessing; she has to do that for all who come at the beginning because they need to go quickly to their work. If you want a longer blessing, you must come afterwards. But, when you have to come early, you can get as much out of the Mother's short blessing, if you are quiet and open.

*
**

You have now taken the right attitude, and if you keep it all will go better. It is to the divine Mother that you have come for Yoga, not for the old kind of life. You should also regard this as an Ashram, not an ordinary Sansar, and in your dealings with others here strive to conquer anger, self-assertion and pride, whatever may be their attitude or behaviour towards you; for so long as you keep these moods, you will find it difficult to make progress in the Yoga.

8-7-1932

*
**

You are the Mother's child and the Mother's love to her children is without limit and she bears patiently with the defects of their nature. Try to be the true child of the Mother; it is there within you, but your outward mind is occupied by little futile things and too often in a violent fuss over them. You must not only see the Mother in dream but learn to see and feel her with you and within you at all times. Then you would find

it easier to control yourself and change; for she being there would be able to do it for you.

30-5-1934

⁂

The dream happened in the vital plane; so it is in the inner being that the resolutions taken must work themselves out first by a change in your nature—afterwards it will be easy to carry them out in the physical life.

⁂

One should not conceal anything from anybody, but one is not bound to tell everything one thinks or does to everybody else—I suppose that is what A meant.

⁂

It is only Mother who can give orders here.

What Mother would like you to do is to come to the Meditation and Pranam putting aside all feelings of ego, anger, quarrel with others, demand for this or that, thinking only of your sadhana and making yourself quiet to receive from her the only things that are really precious and needful.

22-9-1936

⁂

The seeing of colours is the beginning of inner vision, what is called *sūkṣmadṛṣṭi*. Afterwards this vision opens and one begins to see figures and scenes and people. It is good that the seeing began with an image of the Mother.

⁂

It is not a bad shakti that gets inside you and from there does these things; it is small forces from outside that amuse themselves by creating small accidents of that kind, taking advantage of some inattention or forgetfulness etc.

*
**

In work there must be a rule and discipline and as much punctuality as possible in regard to time.

*
**

In the vital plane all kinds of things happen—with reason or without reason.

*
**

You should throw away fear as well as anger and go quietly on your way putting your confidence in the Mother.

17-11-1932

SRI AUROBINDO

SRI AUROBINDO INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY CENTRE AND THE PHILOSOPHY OF INTEGRAL EDUCATION

(Contd.)

The Institutional Form

HAVING stated what has inspired this educational project, let us now turn to the concrete form into which it has developed so far. The school and the university have both grown out of the Ashram. The University Centre now includes the school and affirms the unity of all education by including activities ranging from infant classes to research and the normal unceasing educational pursuits of the adult person. Through its intimate relation with the community life of the Ashram, it asserts the unity of education with the concrete life of the society. Under these broad premises differentiation has occurred, and there are now a number of departments and sections with a variety of activities.

The university section has been adding on each year one higher class, and is now running a fourth year. It provides courses in philosophy, psychology, sociology, mathematics, science, history of civilization, world integration, science of life, English, French, and history of English literature. In the teaching of all subjects a sense of integral knowledge or the unity of all knowledge is consciously, or at least by implication, present as part of the general aspiration of life. In some subjects a further standpoint is present. Philosophy, for example, avows that integral truth is its aim and that direct experience is the means of achieving it. Intellectual representation is but an aid and one stage in the

process. This is indispensable to the mind of man, but we cannot remain satisfied with an ideational representation of truth—we must know the truth. If philosophy conceives itself to be an adventure of ideas and not of experience, then it will limit itself to abstractions. Its creativity, too, will become extremely circumscribed. If it takes living reality as its aim and regards all possible means of knowing it as valid, then it will tend to be as living and creative as reality is. In this approach, all philosophies represent an element of truth, as a particular way of looking at things, but one has to find out the proper place of each of them in the integral truth. Psychology affirms integral personality as its field of exploration, description, and explanation. And it seeks to develop a proper reconciliation and synthesization of Western psychological knowledge with the Eastern. 'World integration' is a new name for 'international relations', and suggests the characteristic approach of the subject. A 'science of life' course includes biology and relevant psychological and philosophical aspects of the phenomenon. The history of civilization takes history as the march of man's civilization as progressively manifesting and realizing a deeper and a higher purpose of existence. The school offers teaching and instruction in English, French, mathematics, science, history, geography, drawing, Indian languages, dramatics, music (vocal and instrumental), painting and dancing, and a number of vocational subjects. The infant classes are handled in a distinctive manner, involving a large measure of freedom and discretion for the teacher.

This is the formal curricular aspect of the University Centre. However, it is by no means the most important part of the students' education. In the afternoons and the evenings there are programmes of almost three hours' duration, which include a variety of sports, practice in concentration and quietness, contact with the Mother, two weekly classes by the Mother, occasional film-shows, and general social contacts. This part of the daily programme is, in fact, emphasized more than the formal programme. It is characterized by greater freedom and a variety of

physical, social, inspirational, and spiritual activities. The younger children perhaps acquire their working knowledge of half a dozen languages during this time. The rest of the time provides occasions of contact with the Mother, hours of music, exhibitions, visits to the library, and a free utilization of the opportunities of life in the Ashram. The curriculum is, therefore, the whole of life and all the contacts therein. It represents an organization of the whole environment and the children are encouraged to avail themselves of the opportunities of enjoying, enriching, and unfolding their life. The classification of students is made on the basis of their level of knowledge in each subject, and the time-table is adapted to this. And the number of students in each class is as far as possible kept under twenty. All this demands a large number of teachers, but that is considered necessary.

In this situation, example is the most important method of teaching and learning. Living is expected to promote living in others. In classroom teaching, too, the example of the teacher is the most important factor. His life and attitudes determine his basic relations with students, and within this context the teacher succeeds, more or less, in evoking interest in his subject and imparting instruction. As to particular methods and technique of instruction, the teacher has complete freedom. For instance, three teachers wished to conduct in collaboration a children's class on special lines, and create for themselves the necessary teaching aids. They were given every encouragement. Their example tended to stimulate thought on the improvement of methods of teaching throughout the institution. The teachers themselves for the most part wish to learn. They are spiritual aspirants and seek an inner growth of consciousness. This is perhaps an important factor, which influences their work as teachers.

In general, the physical lay-out of the institution, with its different departments and activities, is still simple. The main block accomodates the office and provides classrooms for most of of the classes. The library block accommodates the library, offers reading-rooms for young children and grown-ups,

and provides space for small exhibitions and evening music programmes. These premises are being carefully developed as a place which should spontaneously attract people to search freely and personally for knowledge. An intelligent and willing staff, a calm atmosphere, and satisfactory arrangements are all tending to make it an educational institution by itself. The science block has been recently built and offers thoroughly modern laboratories in physics and chemistry and properly equipped classrooms and space for a rapidly growing natural science museum. The 'science of life' department is separately housed, where a museum is being built up, a small laboratory maintained, and classes held. Music and dancing have their own accommodation for their classes of several grades in Indian and European vocal music and instruction in different instruments and in dancing. A separate block provides large halls, where bigger exhibitions are periodically organized for the benefit of the students and the general public. A theatre is now being built with a proper stage and large seating capacity, particularly for the anniversary celebrations of the University Centre. The physical education department is the largest single unit and a most dominant feature of the University Centre. It has a library of its own, in which there is a fine collection of books on the subject. It has a number of good playing-fields and gymnasiums with a great deal of equipment, and it offers opportunities of playing football, cricket, basket-ball, hand-ball, volley-ball, tennis, table-tennis, boxing, wrestling, *lathi* (exercise with a stick), *malkhamba* (a style of Indian gymnastics), yogic *asanas* (postures), swimming, athletics, and gymnastics. The whole department is manned by a large group of senior students, who have been trained to be captains and instructors by an able director. The department provides for the young a rich variety of games and an interesting programme of sports competitions throughout the year, attracts them to its library, where they read books on health and sports, and also creates useful leisure time occupations. In fact, the department guides students very effectively, mostly through free and spontaneous

co-operation, for the greater part of the time they spend outside the formal university instruction. It has made an original contribution in the sphere of sports through its 'gymnastic marching' and has also demonstrated how the problem of discipline can be tackled.

Whilst the University Centre has certainly its own problems of discipline and cultural life, there exist few of the grosser problems of behaviour. It has shown that a life of sports is capable of contributing to the intellectual, moral and spiritual growth as well as to the physical development and health of the students. But it has a distinctive approach of its own in the matter, which it inherits from Sri Aurobindo's and the Mother's perceptions of life. Here, physical education is a part of the integral transformation of life. Sri Aurobindo has said : "A total perfection is the ultimate aim which we set before us, for our ideal is the Divine life which we wish to create here, the life of the spirit fulfilled on earth, life accomplishing its own spiritual transformation even here on earth in the conditions of the material universe. This cannot be unless the body too undergoes a transformation, unless its action and functioning attain to a supreme capacity and the perfection which is possible to it or which can be made possible."[1] The Mother states the issue of physical education in these words : "We must, by means of a rational and clear-seeing physical education, make our body strong and supple so that it may become in the material world a fit instrument for the truth-force which wills to manifest through us."[2] When physical education is to contribute to total perfection and prepare us to be a fit instrument for the truth-force, then evidently it will help education more than it is normally believed to do.

To this account of the physical set-up of the University Centre we must add that there are a few medical clinics and a nursing home, which assist the physical education department,

[1] *Physical Education in Sri Aurobindo Ashram* (Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry)., p. 12.

[2] *ibid.*, p. 10.

and a few boarding houses where students are lodged. The boarding houses are an important feature, since for an integral education the institution must be residential.

The University Centre is still extremely young, and therefore, its buildings in particular are felt to be inadequate and it is being built up rapidly to meet the pressure for expanding its educational opportunities. However, this expansion must follow the law of its own inner growth, of the will and perception that it embodies. No artificial expansion is, therefore, forced upon it. It is being helped to grow, and it is growing.

There are a few features of the concrete life of the University Centre still to consider. The institution is essentially co-educational. This must be so, for in the growth of integral personality any artificial segregation in life would not be helpful. Problems do naturally arise during adolescence, but they have to be faced. Of a total of 408 students, 225 are girls and 183 boys. The school has 340 and the university 68. Most of the students are sons and daughters of parents who are themselves devoted to the view and way of life of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother and keenly wish their children to grow in this way. This certainly helps the children as well as the institution. The institution is happy to give them a sound integral education, and the parents and children are happy to receive it. The question of formal degrees does not, therefore, bother either, for the present at any rate. And work goes ahead as an independent educational adventure. There are 120 teachers for the 408 students. All of them have been drawn from the Ashram community and have been in some way devoted to self-culture, through yoga, study, service, and dedicated living. They possess, therefore, a quality of their own. Evidently they can be trusted with more than usual freedom in the discharge of their duties as teachers. Thus, formal annual examinations for the purposes of promotion have, on the whole, been dispensed with, and the teacher's judgment regarding the work of the students done throughout the year becomes the basis of promotion.

The University Centre is deliberately called 'International', and this is an important aspect of its life. This is, in fact, an overt expression and a practical avowal of the ideals of integral truth, integral personality, and integral culture to which the institution is devoted. Long before the Ashram was started, the unity of man had been a most vivid perception with Sri Aurobindo. From the start, the Ashram was conceived as a centre where intimate international living would grow and where the real unity of man could be realized. With the University Centre this intention became an affirmed purpose, and from its inception representatives of many nations have co-operated heartily in its work and progress. At present fourteen nationalities are represented among the teachers and the students of the University Centre and the Ashram. A large variety of persons come from different parts of India herself. There are thirty-eight non-Indians : a fair proportion in the total community of a thousand persons. The Ashram and the University Centre are thus clearly international centres, where men meet from all over the world. There they seek to realize a living spiritual unity among themselves, a unity which comprehends and transcends all differences of religion, language, and nationality.

The general administration of the University Centre also needs some consideration. In this connexion, what is essential is the perception that, whether in an individual or an institution, the force, which guides and determines growth, is the inner will which it embodies. The organizational form of an institution should, therefore, be an expression of its state of development. Accordingly the outer form here has just been allowed to take shape bit by bit as circumstances demanded, but neither has it been created by direct design nor has it been perfected. As things stand today, a broad administrative structure has come into being. We have an academic head and his deputy working under the guidance and inspiration of the Mother. A registrar manages the office and the records. In addition, a teachers' council meets at least once a month and considers all problems

of discipline, curricula, tests, promotions, and the rest. A few boards of studies draw up syllabuses in different subjects. There are also committees for exhibitions, evening music programmes, and so on. This structure too is elastic. However, as things grow and external contacts increase, the administrative structure will develop. But it may be of interest to the educational world to know the exact approach taken here regarding the growth of the Will and the Spirit, and also of the external organization.

The University Centre, besides providing a comprehensive education for its students, also offers certain educational opportunities to society at large. This is a whole aspect of the University Centre, involving many activities, which are being systematically pursued and developed. Interested persons can attend the University classes. Separate courses called 'lectures for the visitors' are also organized for them, and adult classes, held in the evening, for instruction in English, French, Hindi and Tamil are conducted. Periodical exhibitions, much enjoyed by a large public, constitute a special offering of the University Centre. The 'Ashram Photography' is an organization of the young photographers of the Ashram and has received wide recognition in India and abroad. It organizes annually an international photographic exhibition and brings out a beautiful publication, called simply, 'The Exhibition Catalogue', but which also contains valuable articles on art and its place in life.

In this connexion, we might also mention the Centre's publications which a contribution to the world of letters as well as the general enlightenment of the public. The writings of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother are very extensive; they are being translated into a few European languages and most of the Indian languages. The University Centre has started to bring out a new and uniform series of the works of Sri Aurobindo. Five volumes have been published already, and three more are to follow soon. This series, called the Sri Aurobindo International University Centre Collection, should be a lasting contribution of the University Centre to world

thought and human knowledge. Besides this literature, there are nine periodicals—monthlies, quarterlies, and annuals—which seek to present this world view to the general public.

Psychological Principles

We have now characterized in broad terms the Sri Aurobindo International University Centre. We have given its historical growth, its inspiration, aim and its geneal institutional form. We might next consider a few of the more important psychological principles which govern the working of the institution.

Psychology or experience is the soul and spirit of integral education. Even its philosophy and metaphysics are psychological, since they affirm that ultimate truth and reality too must be experienced. As mere dogmas they are not acceptable. Hence experience, its motivations, its conditions of growth, its various levels and its highest fulfilment, all of which are psychological states and processes, determine the nature and character of the Integral Education of the Sri Aurobindo International University Centre. For all education, the nature of truth, of knowledge, and of personality are the most central concepts. This is also the case with integral education. But its concepts of them are distinctive. The human personality, we have said before, involves three dimensions of experience—the conscious, the subconscious, and the superconscious. The conscious part has to be developed and integrated. The subconscious has to be explored and integrated within itself and with the conscious. And both to be brought into due relationship with the superconscious. Thus alone can an integral personality, fully aware of itself and master of itself and, therefore, effective in its working in a world of increased multiplicities, come into being. This evidently involves an all-round growth of consciousness in man. The consciousness which constitutes our reactions to the environment is our outer personality, virtually our mask, to give the term its etymological meaning. Normally, education concerns itself

with the cultivation and integration of this part. For integral education an effective integration, in fact unification, of the egoistic impulses of the outer personality can be achieved only through the exploration, discovery, and bringing into the forefront of the psychic being, that unitary spiritual principle which is a deep, superconscious fact within us. Education has, therefore, to be so planned that a search for and an awareness of this principle grow continuously. To this end, as much freedom as possible, has to be provided for teachers and students increasingly to live from within, on their own sincere and growing perceptions of truth. Teaching, sports, and general life all have to contribute to it.

Freedom is, therefore, the most important principle in the practice of integral education. Evidently this involves more trust in the goodness of human nature. Initiative will also be greatly appreciated and respected in integral education. All these factors—freeom, trust, and initiative—are obviously indispensable for the growth of the free and creative individuals. However, integral education is not satisfied with an ego-type of individuality, which is a relative integration of the faculties of the outer personality and is essentially separative, involving a necessary dualism of self and not-self. On the contrary, integral education seeks and affirms soul-individuality; integral in its own constitution, it feels an integral relationship with the rest of existence. The discovery of this individuality in our psychological depths and the emergence of it (so that the ego-personality is guided and changed by it into its own mode of action) is the aim of integral education. However, the ego-personality is a significant stage in the process of cosmic evolution and thus it should receive attention and be cultivated. But this must be done with a view, later on, to go beyond, transcend, and transform it into the integral soul-personality. If the growth in each child of such true and original individuality is the ultimate aim, and all educational life has to be attuned to it, then individual attention will also be a basic principle of integral education.

Mass education can create standardized personalities, who can be quite useful for routine tasks in an external, mechanical, social organization, but it cannot help the growth of the essentially individual element in children. In their mutual relations too the teacher and the student will have to be guided by a respect for such individuality. The child is, as Sri Aurobindo affirms, a 'self-evolving soul'. The teacher, then, has to be aware of this, and not regard the child as a bundle of egoistic impulses. His work with the child will consist essentially of evoking this soul and he will be most anxious not to impose upon the child things which will further suppress his inner self. When the teacher is conscious of this in himself, his behaviour and actions will inevitably become evocative rather than suppressive; lessons will, consequently, acquire a new atmosphere. A free, spontaneous, and open atmosphere will increasingly tend to exist. And this is the needed attitude in integral education for the pursuit of truth. Truth is surely not an inert external fact. It is a conscious fact; it must be so in the very nature of truth, and it must be dynamic too, since it guides and governs an evolving and not a static cosmos. If that be the nature of truth, then our essential relation to it can be one of inner seeking, openness, and receptivity. The conscious dynamic truth will then be able, as it were, to flow into us and manifest itself.

In this context, interest, learning, and transfer of training will tend to acquire new meanings. Normally we view these concepts in terms of our outer personality, and then they are rather seriously limited. But integral education makes us aware of a larger soul-personality and seeks to bring us into direct contact with truth itself. In this wide psychological reference, evidently, we cannot be limited to our outer personality. Given the attitude which is not limited by self-affirmations of the kind "I can do only this", "I am not endowed for that", in the history of the Ashram individuals have developed new interests and aptitudes. Through such an attitude, experiences in one field tend to be available for a wider use. In learning, the attitude

of openness leads, at times, to sudden growths of experience. There may have been a long search for, let us say, some insight and understanding of the realm of beauty in painting or poetry, but the actual growth of this may take place in a short period. Such growths are not unknown in human history. But we have yet to acquire their true secret.

The relation of the individual to society is always an important issue and determines educational theory and practice a great deal. In integral education it is the concept of the individual which holds the key to this relation. The individual, considered comprehensively, embraces three supreme facts of all existence, namely, the individual, the universal, and the transcendental. The individual, besides being a unique fact of existence, is also a representative fact of the human species—itself a universal fact. Moreover, the individual is evolving, certain things have been realized and made concrete, and certain others which are yet transcendental to it are in the process of being realized. These three terms and their relationships are indispensable and essential to the nature of man, as also to the cosmos as a whole. That being so, man's individuality in its self-growth demands simultaneously a growth of his sense of identity with society. And if that happens, he must naturally contribute to the well-being of the society as he does to his own. The progress of society has, therefore, to be a positive and practical interest in integral education—and that as an essential fact of individuality, his unique selfhood.

The Success of the University Centre

The entire outlook and the set-up of the Sri Aurobindo International University Centre might easily strike a reader as highly idealistic. He might, therefore, wish to know what success the institution has achieved during its thirteen years of existence. It is obvious that an educational ideology of this kind seeks radically new values and has, therefore, to work against the great

resistance of present conditions. Evidently this means a long period of persevering work in order to demonstrate clearly that something has been achieved. But even during this short period the results have been quite encouraging. The main purpose has been the progressive realization and expression of an integral psychic quality in personality. And it can be said that the students of the University Centre, on the whole, show in their life a comprehensiveness of outlook and a confidence in dealing with the varied situations of life. Physical health, intellectual, aesthetic, moral, and spiritual pursuits are, to some extent, all within their conscious grasp. In their approach to life there is sincerity, honesty, harmony, and inward awareness. Their general understanding of things too is good. And above all they seem to possess a joy which is not altogether external. Their performance at the annual sports competitions during the last few years shows how their physical capabilities have developed. Their love of harmonious living and willing response to higher appeals too are impressive. Quite a good number of the senior students are shouldering important responsibilities in the University Centre and the Ashram. Some are teaching, a few organize exhibitions, and so on. However, all this merely indicates the direction of growth; complete success is a thing of the future.

The teachers too have experienced a re-creation of their personalities in the course of work. In matters of discipline, curriculum, and the management of sports as well certain results have been achieved which are particularly happy and satisfying. But the University Centre being a very young institution, by far its more important contribution to the educational world is its psychology and philosophy of integral education. Here it has many new ideas to offer, its concepts of integral personality, integral truth, and of the varied aspects of integral educational life. These give food for thought and can also suggest new lines of educational practice.

While speaking of the success of the University Centre, we

should also consider its limitations, problems, and difficulties. We have mentioned that freedom is the most important psychological principle in integral education. But normal human nature is often controlled and determined externally, and people like to be helped to do the right thing even against their will. Freedom is cherished, but the responsibility of free action is onerous. The individual has, therefore, to be educated to act in freedom, on the basis of his personal perceptions of truth. And in this a delicate balance between external pressure and personal initiative has to be made, and as the inner capacity to enjoy and utilize freedom increases, the external influences have to be reduced. In fact there always has to be more freedom than can be utilized properly, and this means that opportunities for error have to be created. Under integral education such an opportunity has to be fairly large and, therefore, deviations from the normal too are fairly frequent. This is an aspect which sometimes depresses some teachers. But a longer view of the matter is usually reassuring, since when a deviationist comes home his acceptance of the right thing is more effective.

Another problem of integral education is the discovery of the true place of intellectualism in an integral pursuit of life. In the past the spiritual tradition has to a great extent disparaged things mental. But Sri Aurobindo and the Mother accord to the mind an important place, and in the full growth of personality it has to be carefully cultivated—though as an instrument of the spirit. Normally the mind is the whole burden of education, but that is just what integral education objects to. Therefore it has to create a new synthesis in which the usual traditions of spirituality and of contemporary education are resisted. Its aim is to ensure that the intellectual pursuits are given an important place, but that they do not undermine the moral and the spiritual aspects of life. This balance has yet to be effectively achieved in the institution.

The University Centre cherishes a prayer, a students' prayer, which the Mother has given to it. It reads thus : "Make of us

the hero warriors we aspire to become. May we fight successfully the great battle of the future that is to be born against the past that seeks to endure : so that the new things may manifest and we be ready to receive them."[1] This refers to the great resistance which the University Centre and the entire spiritual effort of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother encounter. They seek a new emergence in the evolution of man, the emergence of the spiritual and the supramental as a universal fact, like mind. This is naturally met by the conservative forces of the things that have come down to us from the past and that seek to endure.

In fact, this entire work of realizing a new evolutional quality in human life is a thing of great vision and it has to be pursued in great faith, not counting the time and the trouble it involves.

INDRA SEN

[1] *Sri Aurobindo International University Centre: Introductory Brochure*, 1953. (Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry).

THE TEACHINGS OF THE MOTHER

IX

The Odyssey of the Psychic

THE Mother has many interesting and unconventional things to say about rebirth. She dispels the obscurity which surrounds this important subject, exposes the fraud or self-deception of those who retail entertaining stories of past lives, and gives a clear account of what happens to the soul after it has departed this life—through what worlds it passes, how it assimilates its past experiences and what is the process of its reincarnation. The careful reader will find the cloud of his misconceptions on this subject melting away under the glare of her categoric utterrances; for her words spring from her own experiences and not from her speculative thought. As the problem of rebirth is of universal interest, the Mother's visions and experiences will be found to be very illuminating.

The original and ultimate rationale of reincarnation, according to the Mother, is not that the soul is entangled in the meshes of karma and has, in consequence, to pass through a series of births till it is liberated. Maya or karma or samskaras may be the apparent and ancillary cause of the soul's rebirth, but the real reason, the compelling cause and drive is the irrepressible urge in the soul for evolution. Originally a spark of the sempiternal Fire, the soul develops here in Matter into an individual being through the chequered process of rebirth, even as a new-born child grows into a man, or a seed grows into a tree. The cycle of births and deaths is, therefore, an indispensable means of evolution, freely and voluntarily adopted by it. The pain and suffering incidental to this cycle is the inevitable price it has to pay

for dispelling the darkness of inconscience and snapping the bonds of ignorance in which it is held. Pain is, indeed, nothing but a natural reaction of ignorance, of the little ego-bound personality of man, to those impacts of life which it fails to bear and assimilate. Suffering breaks asunder the moulds of thought and feeling, the hard shells of habits in which our being is so complacently imprisoned. It widens our consciousness and calls forth our latent strength. But if we go behind pain and suffering, behind the confederacy of untoward impacts and circumstances, we shall discover the organising and directing will of the soul, its will to grow, to develop by experience, to harmonise and unify the discordant elements of its instrumental nature, so that it can use it freely and masterfully for the work of the Divine in the material world. The developed soul does not hesitate to choose a life of pain and suffering, if it thinks that in that way it can accelerate its evolution.

Viewed in this light, birth ceases to be a mournful and meaningless episode, and death loses all its paralysing horror. Every incident of life, every pang of birth and death, all that we call chance (because we cannot probe beyond appearance and fate), everything is accepted by the soul, everything is grist to its evolutionary mill. It profits by every event in the long chain of its rebirths, whether the event is happy or unhappy, fortunate or unfortunate, according to the superficial standards of human ignorance. And since progress is possible only on earth, as all schools of Indian philosophy unanimously hold, birth and a long life of dedicated action are always welcome, for they are always conducive to the soul's evolution and a means of its self-expression...*kurvanneveha karmani jijivishet shatam samah.* Birth should not be accepted on sufferance, as a means of exhausting the *pràravdha*, but as a field, and the only field, of evolutionary progress, as an opportunity for the soul's awakening and ascent to the higher levels of consciousness, and, when the ascent is achieved, for the manifestation of the Divine on earth through its liberated and transformed nature.

"Rebirth is a necessity, it is compulsory; for it is through reincarnation...taking up a new body...that he (the psychic being) progresses, develops and grows. It is in the physical life and in the physical body that the soul slowly builds itself until it becomes a fully conscious being."[1]

After-death Journey and the Process of Rebirth

As I have already said, the Mother does not subscribe to the current notions about rebirth. According to her, it is not a fact, except only in some cases, that a soul takes birth immediately after leaving its old body. If it did so, its next incarnation would perforce be a mere duplication or repetition of its previous personality. This popular notion does not square with the fact of the soul's post-mortem journeyings in the different worlds described in the religious books of India. What actually happens is that after death the soul continues to live in the subtle body for some time—the time varies in each case—till the latter is dissolved. The soul then continues to live in the vital sheath, *prāṇamaya koṣa*, having experiences in the vital world. The vital sheath, then, dissolves in its turn, and the soul lives on in the mental sheath, *manomaya koṣa*, till that too is dissolved. When all the three sheaths are dissolved, the soul goes to its own plane, the psychic plane, for rest, for assimilation of its past experiences,—the quintessence of which it carries with it,—and for preparation for the next incarnation. "In the psychic world there is a kind of blissful repose." This is the normal process, but there are certain exceptional cases in which birth may follow immediately after death; but such cases are, as I have already said, rare. For instance, if a person is inordinately attached to somebody or something on earth, he will be irresistibly pulled by his attachment to return to the earth almost immediately after his death, or, if a soul has just emerged from animal life and assumed the

[1] *The Yoga of Sri Aurobindo*, Part VII by Nolini Kanta Gupta.

human form for the first time, it may not feel at home in the new environment and atmosphere, and has to depart only to return again and again till it gets acclimatised and accustomed to the ways of human life. There are other cases also, but it would be going beyond our present scope to deal with them here.

It would be interesting to note in this connection that the Mother totally discounts the traditional belief that the human soul has to be born as an animal or a tree, if its karma in human life has been very dark and gross. In her view, if a soul, in course of its evolution, has once reached the level of human consciousness and lived a human life, it can never sink back to the obscure levels of animal or vegetable consciousness, whatever may be the nature of its karma. This kind of total devolution is not observed in the normal working of Nature. What actually happens sometimes is that, if a man is very vicious or extremely avid of the gross pleasures of the lower prana, a part of his pranic being or the lower vital may project itself into the animal birth for the desired enjoyment. It may enter the body of a pig or a dog or any other animal. But his soul or central being can never take an animal body. Such projection of a part being into non-human birth can be but a temporary episode in the life of the man for the exhaustion of his abnormal animal appetites.

Another thing that happens sometimes is that a certain formation, mental, vital or subtle-physical, of a dead man may remain in the earth atmosphere and enter into a suitable living person for its own satisfaction. "...When I speak of a formation entering into a living person, the formation does not mean the man himself who is dead, that is to say, his soul or psychic being. I say that it is only a special faculty which continues to remain in the earth atmosphere even after the death of the man to whom the faculty belonged : it was so well developed, well formed that it continues to retain its independent identity."[1] The Mother gives an example of the above phenomenon : "I shall tell you

[1] *The Yoga of Sri Aurobindo* Part VII by Nolini Kanta Gupta.

the very interesting case of a musician, a pianist, a pianist of a very high order; he had hands that had become something marvellous, full of skill, accuracy, precision, force, swiftness; it was truly remarkable. The man dies comparatively young, and with the feeling that had he lived he would have continued to advance in his musical self-expression. Such was the intensity of his aspiration that his subtle hands retained their form without getting dissolved, and wherever there was someone passive and receptive and at the same time a good musician, the hands of the dead man would enter into the living hands that played. In the case that I saw the man used to play well enough normally, but quite in the ordinary way; he became, however, as he continued to play, all on a sudden not only a virtuoso, but a marvellous artist; it was the hands of the other person which made use of him."[1]

To take up our thread. When the time is ripe for another incarnation, the psychic comes out of the psychic plane and begins again the downward journey. The Mother gives a very interesting description of how the soul chooses in advance the form it will take, the place where it will be born, and the line of progress it will follow. "As I have told you...there are psychic beings that are just on the way of formation and growth, they usually cannot choose at the beginning, they cannot choose very much. But when they have come to a certain degree of development and consciousness, they make a choice; generally when they are still in the body, when they have gathered a certain amount of experience, they decide what is to be their next field of experience. I shall give you an illustration, although somewhat external. A psychic being, for example, needed the experience of power, authority, command, and wanted to know the reactions of these movements and also how to turn them towards the Divine, to learn, in a word, what these things can teach. So the soul took the body of a king (or a queen). When

[1] *The Yoga of Sri Aurobindo*, Part VII by Nolini Kanta Gupta.

it had the necessary experience, learnt what it had to learn, it gave up the body, no longer useful. It is at that moment when it decides to leave the body but is still in the body that the soul makes the choice of the next experience. The choice very often takes a course of action and reaction. If the soul has experienced and studied a particular field, its choice falls upon a contrary field on the following occasion. Thus if the soul has had the experience of a kingly position and worked through that to enter into a conscious relation with the Divine, then at the moment of leaving the body that served with power and authority and command, it perhaps would say : 'This time I shall take a middle position, neither high nor low, where there will be no need to lead mostly an external life, where one is neither in great luxury nor in great misery.' With that resolution it returns to the psychic world for the necessary rest, for the assimilation of past experiences and preparation for the future. When the time comes for return upon earth, for the descent into a physical body, it remembers naturally the choice it made..."[1] From above it surveys the earth atmosphere and can discern things, not, indeed, in their detail, but in their general contours. But the degree of the discernment depends upon its development. A developed psychic can even choose a particular country and a particular milieu in which it intends to be born. It has in view the kind of life it will lead here on earth, the culture in which it will be brought up, and the education it will avail itself of. As it descends more and more and comes closer to the earth, its perception becomes clearer, and it advances towards the region which appears to it likely to answer to its evolutionary purpose. Here a new factor intervenes. The choice of the psychic is not enough, there must be an aspiration and a receptivity in the atmosphere of its choice. It is said of Sri Ramakrishna's mother that she had an aspiration for having a godlike being as her child. This aspiration from below is a sort of invocation or call,

[1] *The Yoga of Sri Aurobindo*, Part VII by Nolini Kanta Gupta.

the peculiar vibration of which is easily felt by the developed psychic. It perceives a pin-point of light there, and precipitates headlong into that atmosphere. But this headlong plunge lands it directly into the darkness and inconscience of the material world, and for a more or less long time, even after its birth, it remains, as it were, dazed, lost to itself and lost to its preconceived purpose in life. "Generally it takes time for the soul to come to its own. It wakes up but slowly from its numbness, it is only gradually that it begins to understand that it is there for some reason and by choice. This oblivion is occasioned by the presence of the mind and mental education which completely shuts off the psychic consciousness. All kinds of circumstances, happenings, experiences—external and emotional —are then needed to strike open the doors within, to bring the memory that one comes from elsewhere and for a very special reason."[1] In this way all knowledge comes to the psychic as memory, as reminiscence, to use Plato's expression; for all knowledge is already in the psychic; what is needed is the shocks and impacts of the world to break open the seals and let the latent consciousness, the veiled knowledge, shine out in their unbarred wideness. If we look at rebirth from this standpoint, we can easily understand why the psychic sometimes chooses difficulties, struggles and hardships as very drastic means to the evolution of its consciousness and the purification of its instrumental nature. "Many people come to me and complain : 'What have I done in my past life that I have to be under such difficult conditions now, to suffer so much !' I always reply : 'But don't you see it is a blessing for you, the divine grace upon you ? In your past life perhaps you yourself asked for such conditions so that you may make greater progress through them."[2]

Our ordinary, ignorant notions of good fortune and ill fortune, of justice and reward and punishment have only an ethical value, not spiritual. What we regard as the good fortune of a

[1] [2] *The Yoga of Sri Aurobindo*, Part VII by Nolini Kanta Gupta.

man—good looks, wealth, fame etc.—may be the cause of his downfall and degradation, while adversity, obstacles, hardships, poverty, etc. may and do sometimes act as the most powerful lever of the soul's ascent. The soul knows infinitely better than our cocksure mind what is good for its evolution and growth. It uses rebirth as the only means of the evolution of its consciousness, and the evolution of consciousness is the primary end of human life. The other things must be considered as secondary or subservient to it, and as instruments of its self-expression.

For the evolution of its consciousness and the development of its being with all its faculties, the soul freely chooses the most congenial atmosphere and situation in its earthly life. It changes its role, its line of self-development, the pattern of its life and action from birth to birth. "Suppose the psychic being has had the experience of the life of a writer. The function of the writer is to express himself, his perceptions and observations and judgments in words : he has a certain field, a certain range of associations and circumstances in which to live and move. But there are other fields and ranges beyond and outside of which he has no experience. So he may say to himself : 'I have lived with my head, I know something of the intellectual reactions to life ; now let me live with my heart and experience the reactions of feeling and passion'....So the psychic being, in order to have this new kind of experience, abandons his intellectual heights, so to say, and comes down to the vital plane. He is no longer a creative genius, but an ordinary man, but with a heart enriched or enriching itself with its intense or generous movements....It is not rare to see psychic beings that have reached the maximum of their growth in certain directions, take up a very modest and ordinary life in some other new direction or for some other purpose....Can you say it is a decline and a fall ? It is only facing life, meeting its problems from another angle, another point of view."[1] The psychic makes no distinction between glory and

[1] *The Yoga of Sri Aurobindo*, Part VII, by Nolini Kanta Gupta.

obscurity, success and failure, as we understand them. What it is most concerned with is the growth of its consciousness, the development of its possibilities, the variety and richness of its experiences, and the flowering of its innate swabhâva and swadharma in its outer nature and life. The total urge in it is not for self-extinction, but for self-fulfilment.

Groups of Souls

The souls are not, as is maintained by Sankhya and Jainism, and, more or less, by the concensus of philosophical opinion in India, absolutely separate entities, like Leibniz's monads, coming down to earth and departing in perfect isolation, having nothing to do with one another. According to the Mother, there are groups or families of souls, bound together by an inner affinity, that come down more or less at the same time or epoch for a particular type of work in their earthly life. They follow each a certain basic line of development and are intimately connected with certain aspects and phases of the evolution of the earth-consciousness. Each soul, being a spark or ray of the divine Consciousness, plays its individual part, as a constituent of its group, in the work of the illumination of the material inconscience. The coming together of many kindred souls under the prophet's banner, or round the revolutionary presence of the Avatâra or Vibhuti testifies to the fact of the existence of groups or families of souls. One such group, it is said, gathered round the personality of Sri Chaitanya and another round Sri Ramakrishna, who had seen it in vision before it came to him physically. Sri Ramakrishna would often say in regard to a sadhaka or yogi that he belonged to this house or that, meaning, evidently, this line or that of the manifesting divine Consciousness. All this proves that there is a universal Will and a universal plan behind the apparent phenomenon of the soul's coming and going, a community and solidarity of purpose, and a complex interplay of evolutionary interests, which are ignored by the

simplist theory of the individual soul's transmigration in perfect insularity. The theory of karma, as it is expounded from different standpoints, Hindu, Buddhist and Jaina, errs on the side of oversimplification, and bypasses the important truth that karma is not only individual, but collective; that there is a constant intermingling of all karmas, and that no individual karma can pursue its solitary course completely uninvaded and unaffected by the environmental and collective karma.

A new, revealing light is thrown upon the problem of rebirth and the grouping of souls by the following words of the Mother :

"To understand rightly the problem of what is called reincarnation, you must perceive that there are two factors in it which require consideration. First, there is the line of divine consciousness which seeks to manifest from above and upholds a certain series of formations, peculiar to itself, in the universe which is its field of manifestation. Secondly, there is the psychic consciousness which climbs up from below, the seed of the Divine developing through time till it meets the Force from above and takes the impress of the supramental Truth."[1]

We have already seen how the psychic, a tiny, pulsing spark, develops through many births into a full-fledged psychic being in man. When it is fully formed, it often feels an aspiration for a greater realisation, a higher ascent, in order to manifest the Divine more perfectly on earth. "As a result of this pull, it generally draws towards itself a being of a higher order, from a higher plane, from the Overmind, as Sri Aurobindo calls it, a being of involution who incarnates in the psychic being. These overmental entities are termed gods or divinities by men. Now when the fusion takes place, of a god into a psychic being, the latter naturally increases in stature and partakes of the nature of the god and acquires also the capacity to produce emanations; that is to say,

[1] *Words of the Mother*, 3rd Series.

it throws out of itself a part which possesses an independent existence and can incarnate in others. In this way there may be not only two but several emanations or projections of the same original being. In other words, there may be a single psycho-divine origin but many personalities coming out of it....If you emanate a being out of you, you remain whole and entire without losing anything of yourself and the emanation too is a being whole and entire living its independent life."[1]

The subject is somewhat difficult, because occult to our ordinary ideas, and rather unfamiliar. But the fact of the higher gods or a ray of the divine Consciousness entering into exceptional men and investing them with a superhuman greatness, majesty or valour, is not quite unknown to readers of the ancient myths. But what is original and very illuminating from the standpoint of the soul's evolutionary purpose is the Mother's statement that there are different lines of divine Consciousness seeking to manifest from above and upholding various series of formations here below for their diverse self-expression. The statement establishes the teleological significance of the soul's evolution. It makes it clear that the end of the soul's evolution is not flight from the material world, or nirvâna, but letting the divine Consciousness descend into and flow out of its liberated and perfected individuality and manifest its infinite glory upon earth. The soul's aspiration from below and the divine Grace from above combine to fulfil what the soul seeks through many births and the earth is made for.

Memory of Past Lives

Considerable romance and an extravagant play of fancy and imagination have entered into the fascinating subject of the memory of past lives. It is not unoften that we hear fantastic stories about one's recovering a knowledge of one's past life or lives. It is sometimes reported that somebody has recounted in

[1] *The Yoga of Sri Aurobindo*, Part VII by Nolini Kanta Gupta.

staggering detail the incidents and scenes of his previous birth, and described the persons and places he was then familiar with. Such reports have to be taken with a grain of salt. "What commonly goes by the name of such recollection is, mostly, either deliberate imposture or a fabrication out of a few spasmodic hints received from within." The fact of the matter is that it is only the psychic, when it has evolved sufficiently to come to the front of the nature, that holds and carries clear memories of its past births. Till the psychic is fully awake and in control of its terrestrial nature, the human being is an ephemeral individual made up of diverse, heterogeneous elements, a composite flux with only the semblance of a constant personality. Death breaks up all this shifting formation. With the dissolution of the different parts, the memory is also dissolved. The psychic then goes to the psychic plane, carrying with it the essence of its experiences. When it returns to human birth again, it puts on a new mind, a new vital or prana and a new body in accordance with its past experiences and the fresh line of evolution it is going to pursue. Where then does the memory of past lives reside ? For, nothing, except the psychic, survives the dissolution of the constructed personality. If the psychic is not much developed and the life and mind it assumes are not purified and organised enough to receive its direct influence and communication, there is no possibility of the external personality knowing anything of the soul's past births. It is only when the nature parts are organised round the psychic and open to its communications, that the external personality can have a flash of some of the incidents of the previous birth. And it is usually the moments of the psychic awakening or the psychic touch that are preserved in the memory rather than the outer details of life. "At a given point in our life, there comes a special circumstance, there is a call within, an absolute inner necessity that brings forward the psychic and a contact is made perhaps for an instant. That experience is preserved in the psychic memory. More than the outer circumstances and the physical events, however, what is cherished in the consciousness is the

intimate emotion, the vibration that accompanied the perception at the time....These psychic flashes, more in some cases, less in others, are the only genuine and authentic records of the story of a person's lives."[1]

"It is a being who is completely identified with his psychic, who has organised his whole person, in all its parts, around this centre; in fact, a being of one piece, entirely and solely turned to the Divine that can alone remember or hold in his consciousness something like a totality of his personal history. For in his case even when the body drops, the other parts being integrated and taken up into the soul substance maintain their individual existence; the personality formed around the psychic continues with its memory in tact; even it can pass from one life to another without losing its consciousness."[2]

The psychic memory has an extraordinary intensity. It retains with a wonderful clarity the most precious moments of its life, moments of the widening and illumination of its consciousness, moments when it experienced its freedom and bliss, or felt the rapture of the Divine's embrace. Till the psychic has organised and integrated our being, the perishable parts of our nature are all dissolved after our death, and the memories and impressions stored in the physical brain or floating amorphous in the subconscient, are also dissolved.

The problem of karma and rebirth is a knotty problem comprising countless possibilities of variation and departure, and the supraphysical worlds teem with mysteries and marvels for our human mind. It is only a developed occult vision and a penetrating spiritual perception that can command a clear and comprehensive view of those worlds and the elements and energies, beings and forces abounding in them. And it is only the souls shepherded by divine Grace that can pass through them unscarred and safe.

RISHABHCHAND

[1] *The Yoga of Sri Aurobindo*, Part VII, by Nolini Kanta Gupta.
[2] *The Yoga of Sri Aurobindo*, by Nolini Kanta Gupta.

THE MEETING OF EAST AND WEST AND THE PROMISE OF A NEW HOPE FOR LIFE AND LITERATURE

WHEN we talk of Eastern and Western literature, what is it that we mean exactly ? It is true enough that certain creations of the human mind have occurred in the East, meaning Asia, and others in the West, meaning Europe and America. Does this regional classification imply much more than the mere external fact of accidental geographical distribution—or is there far more in it than meets the eye? Because a work of literature is of Western origin, does it invariably signify certain special characteristics ? Like the coloured races of the East, are the literary creations of the East too recognisably coloured in some respect or other ?

Everyone is familiar with the hypothesis put forward by the celebrated French literary historian, M. Taine. What, pray, is the etiology of literature ? Taine's answer was : the race, the *milieu*, and the moment. It would appear the people and the place creatively come together in a particular context of time—and literature is born ! The men of the Heroic Age created the epic; the men of a city-centred sophisticated age evolved the drama; the industrial age of the 19th century gave the novel a terrific vogue; and the technological demi-paradise of the 20th century has been responsible for the slick detective story, the swift filmscript, and the bright television show.

There is some truth no doubt in these broad, almost sweeping generalisations,—but surely there is something else as well. Aren't we missing the essential fact that the creation of literature —however other factors also may contribute to it—is an individual experience ? The swimmer, whether he swims with or against the current, albeit the current helps him along or challenges resistance, is himself the principal measure of the adventure of

swimming. It is difficult to forget—whatever certain theorists of the communal origin of poetry may say—that Valmiki and Homer were two wise old men with a long life-time's experience to draw upon at will, not just corporations of literary hacks fabricating somehow the immortal epics that we know. Certainly, Sophocles and Aristophanes, Kalidasa and Bhavabhuti, Shakespeare and Moliere were men with a pronounced individuality of their own; and so were the great poets, novelists and essayists. *Paradise Lost* and *The Prelude* were the conscious creations of particular poets; neither *The Tale of Genji* nor *The Brothers Karamazov* was a manifesto issued by a people nor a report drawn by a committee; and the 'essays' of Montaigne and Charles Lamb could only have been written by them, and by nobody else.

Is literature, then, a social, racial product, the eruption of a region, the precipitate of the Time Spirit—or is it really the creation of sundry men and women, driven by their daemons, racked by their pains and fears, sustained by their dreams and visions ? Which is the whole truth about the adventure of swimming : the current or the swimmer ? Perhaps the real truth of the matter is that there is a dual quality in man and in literature. Look at him one way, he is walled within, he is an isolated peak, he is verily unique; but look at him from a different angle, and he is seen to be one with all the generations of Adam, a part of all that he has met, an atomic constituent of the cosmos. Likewise, a work of literature—nay, a single line of poetry, a single significant phrase even—is a marvel, a star in its own right, governed by its own law; it is also, when viewed another way, a flicker that is a part of a continuous phenomenon, a star indeed but immediately affiliated to the rest of the galaxy, and subject to the primordial laws of the universe.

I have said all this because it is necessary to shed dogmatism when talking of Eastern and Western literature. It is doubtless a convenient method of division : and doubtless too there is some justification for presenting Eastern and Western in terms of contrast. But Eastern no less than Western literature com-

prises a variety of sub-regional literatures, each with its own history and marked by a diversity of approaches and achievements. How shall we evaluate the greatest common measure between these literatures of the East or of the West ? What is the common factor between Indian, Chinese and Japanese literatures,—what is the 'Asiatic' or 'Oriental' quality that gives a marked individuality to Arabic, Persian, Bengali, Marathi, Tamil, Burmese and Sinhalese literatures ? Are American, Australian and South African literatures the same stuff as English is made of—and does the East-West division set Indo-Anglian literature (or Indian Writing in English) in sharp contrast to Anglo-American-Australian literature ? Is Russian literature within the Eastern or the Western zone ? Is there more in common between Spanish and Portuguese literatures or between the Spanish and the Peruvian literatures ? In other words, is physical contiguity or linguistic affinity or identity more important in defining the relations between literatures ? There is, again, the question of nationality : Urdu literature and Bengali literature are being created today by the nationals of both India and Pakistan,—but which is the stronger force, a common language or a common religion or nationality ? It is clear that we have to be very wary indeed while discussing literatures in terms of East and West.

In our own lives, in the life around us, we observe the clash, the confusion of two seeming opposites : the visible phenomenon of change and the transcendent fact of continuity. Literature too reflects this clash, this confusion. The poet indites line after line, completes tragedy after tragedy; what is it that holds together the entire body of his creative work—holds it together even when he is himself no more ? What is it that gives the colour of unity, the flavour of life, to the work of a writer, or to the creations of an age, of a country, of a hemisphere ? One touch of nature makes the whole world kin,—and the more a work of literature is touched with universality, the wider will be its area of comprehension, the greater its capacity to give pleasure to people of other climes and of other times, the more uncanny

its freedom from attachment to a region, a period, or a segment of time. A writer may describe things, or he may give currency to certain ideas, or he may pierce appearance and reveal quintessential reality; but whereas 'things' or 'ideas' may differ from place to place, from age to age, Reality must for ever and everywhere be the same. At its truest, deepest, then, all literature is contemporaneous, it is man speaking to men,—not the East accosting the West or the West the East, nor the past communicating with the present or the present with the future. Space is annihilated and time is exceeded in great literature which is, indeed, seraphically free from the taint of place, race and even personality.

On the other hand, a work of literature can seldom be uniformly touched by the light of the universal; the mystical or metaphysical is oft mixed with the material and the mundane, the universal with the local, the evanescent, and the temporal. Superficially men differ, ages differ, countries differ; we dress differently, we laugh at different things, we worship different idols, we shout different slogans—yet our experience of love and tragedy and mystical self-transcendence is the same the world over. The seeming diversity is there no less than the underlying unity, and it is interesting to wrestle with the diversity if only to hew our way to the unity. Since literature best catches both the surface variations of terrestrial life and the hidden ineluctable rhythms of universality, the spiritual communication between people and people, nation and nation, the East and the West, and the past, present and the future, could best be carried on through the medium of great masterpieces of literature. Politics divides men and nations, economics is no easy cementing force; organised religion is often too dogmatic, and philosophy too schematic. It is great literature—great poetry especially—that like a blinding flash stings us into the recognition of our common origins and light the way to our common destination.

Let us grant, then, subject to all qualifications, that as separate entities Eastern literature and Western literature have certain broadly distinguishable features—features that are really an ex-

pression of the differences in physical and mental climate between the East and the West; let us grant, again, that notwithstanding the surface variation, all great literature is lit by the clear light of universality. The natural, inevitable result therefore should be the coming together of Eastern and Western literature, a growing reciprocity of understanding and appreciation, a coalescing of uniting the two sustaining flames into a new blaze of creative purpose, and the possibility of a common direction for humanity's advance. Are the prospects of such intermingling and coalescing particularly bright at the present moment ? Dare we hope that a new synthesis is round the corner ?

It would be a rough summary to state that, by and large, Eastern literature, in so far as it is distinctive, has tended to explore inner life, to scour the ocean of the Unknown, to scale the infinitudes of the immortal Spirit. From Rishi and Saint and Messiah and Mystic have flowed life-giving streams that have met to enrich the common fount of the spiritual experience and spiritual knowledge of the human race. On the other hand, Western literature, in so far as it is strikingly individual, has tended to master the secrets of external nature, to cultivate the arts of peace and war, and to portray the processes of man's emotional and intellectual life. No doubt the West can claim its great laureates of the spirit, and the East its naked apologists of materialism; because the seeming or major preoccupation is matter or the spirit, it doesn't follow that the other basic term of human experience is denied or ignored altogether. Poverty is today a less intractable problem in the West than in the East; the Western writers are therefore able to concentrate on the problem of security or on the problem of individual or collective happiness. In the underdeveloped countries of the East, however, poverty is still the primary problem, and it is no wonder that few writers are able to tear themselves away from it. Again, the West, having tried monarchy, dictatorship, anarchy and democracy of various shades, is now seeking to find out whether there is not something left out of account all that is really at the root of the trouble; but the East, only recently emerging from

colonialism or foreign domination or feudal rule, is inclined for the time being to put too much faith in forms of government,—in this or that pattern of social and political organization,—ignoring the health of the mere individual. In a way the traditional roles of the East and West are being reversed—at least superficially. It thus happens that Eastern literature today is superficially more interested in material values than in the spiritual, while some western writers at least are more keenly conscious of the spiritual malady that is at the heart of human ills. Even in spite of all these developments, the old distinction between the East and the West may be allowed to stand in essentials. It is, of course, no more than has provoked attraction and interaction through the ages. It is difficult to imagine a satire like Orwell's *Animal Farm* being produced in the East, nor a play like Junji Kinoshita's *The Twilight Crane* being produced in the West; yet each has its fervent admirers in the other half of the world. There has undoubtedly been a broad two-way traffic linking up the profound experiences of the East and the West from very early times to the present, but the traffic has quickened and has increased in volume of late, thanks to the Radio, the TV, and the near-abolition of distance by the marvels of modern transport and communication. Organizations like the P.E.N. and UNESCO, and periodical international gatherings of writers like the present Congress, have tried to canalise the flow of the traffic or measure the permanent results of this exchange, interplay and circulation of ideas, values and experiences. Coming together as we do under the compulsion of rapid technological change and the imminent threat of the very collapse of civilisation,—sitting here together, sharing the same anxieties, applying our minds to the same problems,—we are enabled to realise that East and West are alike based upon a common humanity, they are moving towards a common destiny, and the same force drives them to master the world within and the world without, trying to turn man into a more responsible and reasonable creature and the world into a better-ordered and more happy world.

In the past, a Goethe, a Schopenhauer, responded agreeably

to the literatures of the East; Emerson drank deep in the Pierian springs of Indian spirituality, and Thoreau ardently desired that the pure waters of Walden Pond should mingle with the sacred waters of the Ganga. In modern times, writers like W. B. Yeats, George Russell, Ezra Pound, T. S. Eliot, L. H. Myers, E. M. Forster, Aldous Huxley, Hermann Hesse, Pearl Buck, and a host of others have fruitfully turned to the East, while the Imagist poets of yesterday were eager to imitate the brevity and the jewelled intensity of the Japanese *haiku* and *tanka*. The East, on its part, has borrowed from the West a new vocabulary, and many novel literary forms and modes—the social drama, the satire, the essay, the novel and the short story, the 'proleterian' and 'progressive' movements, surrealism and stream of consciousness. Some writers like Emerson and Thoreau who were once influenced by Indian thought have themselves exerted no mean influence on Indians of a later day. If Eliot and Aldous Huxley have been in their different ways influenced by Upanishadic thought, their own influence on contemporary Indian writers is far from negligible. But apart from the actual buzz of the traffic, the free exchange of goods and services, and the welling up of a new cosmopolitan fellowship, there is perhaps also a deeper attempt at integration—the attempt, that is, to forge a global consciousness that should inform the literatures of tomorrow. Cannot the East assimilate Western science, accept the stir of life, the pragmatic activity, and the giant endeavours of the West, and at the same time help the West to re-establish its lost contact with the innermost truth of things ? It is a curious fact of literary history that tragedy—the form of literature associated with Aeschylus and Sophocles, Shakespeare and Racine—refuses to take root in the East. We have read Shakespeare in India for over 100 years, but the mass of the people (apart from the intellectuals) are not at home in *Lear* or *Hamlet*. It may be argued that Kalidasa's *Shakuntalam* is a tragedy once we omit the last Act; that the Ayodhya Khanda of *Ramayana* is essentially a tragedy. But we have no right to play Procrustes to great artistic creations merely to prove a theory.

The fact is the East refuses—blindly, stupidly, if you will—to see physical death in terms of finality. The crucifixion of Jesus is no tragedy, if one believes that it was followed by the Resurrection, but faith is needed to take the Resurrection seriously. Merely in rational or human terms, certain disasters are inexplicable; hence the need for certainty which only spiritual knowledge can give. The hope of the world therefore lies, in Sri Aurobindo's words, "in re-arousing in the East of the old spiritual practicality and large and profound vision and power of organization under the insistent contact of the West and in the flooding out of the light of Asia on the Occident, no longer in forms that are now static, effete, unadaptive, but in new forms stirred, dynamic and effective".

The challenge of the hour can be stated simply : Since a nuclear holocaust is said to be impending, will East and West understand each other sufficiently to make a creative alliance and march towards the new horizons of the future? The threatened catastrophe is not inevitable; it can be, and should be, averted. Will the writers of today and tomorrow seek to comprehend the claims of the material world as also the intimations of the Spirit, —will they yoke the new pragmatism with the new awakened spirituality so as to complete the whole splendorous arc of human experience ? If this could be done, literature would indeed grow magical wings and bring heaven and earth together, or rather fashion out here a new heaven and a new earth.

The creative coalescing of East and West in literature could thus very well mean the emergence of a new literature and a new way of life and a new hope for the future. Our aesthetic values would change, the poetic line would approximate to the *mantra* —the rhythmical language of the Spirit—as in Eliot's *Four Quartets*, Edith Sitwell's *The Shadow of Cain*, or Edwin Muir's *The Labyrinth*,—and the epic of the future would be such a poem as Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri*, a superb poetic integration of all knowledge and spiritual experience, comprehending the past, present and the future. Form and diction would both be charged with spiritual

intention, and aesthetic values would be but a function of spiritual values. On the other hand, the new literature would point also to a new way of life—there would certainly be a breaking down of artificial barriers and mere mental constructions, the world would cease to be polarised between East and West, it would be seen to be 'one world' and 'a brave new world', and there would be realised in the fulness of time the new heaven and new earth of our fond imaginations.

It is possible indeed to see in all the current voluminous vociferous traffic between East and West no more than the chatter of the market-place and the jingle of the money-changers. But a more anxious and careful scrutiny would appear to reveal certain movements, approaches and possibilities that seem to augur well for the future. If this were no vain self-delusion East and West must come together in the coming years in closer and still closer creative partnership, evolve new aesthetic values and forge purposeful ways of life, and so set the stage at last for the next decisive evolutionary advance of the race.

K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar

(*Paper read at the P .E. N. Conference* 1957 *in Tokyo*).

THE TEACHING OF SRI AUROBINDO (5)

The Ideal of Human Unity

ALLIED to the question of the individual and his society is the larger problem of the society and the collectivity of societies—the entire human race. Here too, the solution is envisaged on the same lines on which the rights and claims of man and his environmental society are reconciled. For, as Sri Aurobindo observes, the issue is basically the same. There is One Spirit, the Divine Reality, which manifests itself singly in the individual and multiply in the humanity. The society is the middle term in this collective manifestation. At the core there is an underlying unity throughout. To awake to this truth of existence and to realise this basic unity of one's self with the rest of his fellow beings as jets of a common fount is the way to a radical solution of the problem.

Unity is the base and unity the summit of the whole evolutionary movement. Nature starts with a solid unity in Matter; there at the basis all is concretely one. It is only with the eruption of the life element that this unity is apparently broken up and there is a diversity of forms which go on multiplying variously till there appears the principle or power of an overt consciousnesse or half-consciousness, the mind, through which Nature attempts to restore, gradually, the truth of unity amidst the blossomed variety. It sets into operation the force of aggregation even at the animal level; these living creatures tend to gather together in their respective types and it is the rule of the hive, the pack, that comes into prominence. This trend acquires momentum with the advent of man—the conscious evolutionary being.

The earliest unit of aggregation in the human kind is the family. From this unit Nature initiates larger and yet larger

circles of agglutination. This movement of combination is actuated by the necessities of security, of aggrandisement and enlargement which are the impelling motives of progress in evolutionary Nature at this stage. From the family the commune; from the commune the tribe, the clan. The communities take a definite shape, each developing its own way of life, its own modes and beliefs. Each people evolve its own political and social life; city states, principalities, kingdoms gradually come into being. These living units rub each other in collaboration or in combat, run into each other's life and eventually get merged into yet bigger political and administrative units. That is how the nation-state which is the strongest collective unit so far developed by Nature has come to be. The nation is an organic entity. It represents the collective ego of the people who have constituted it. It is a landmark in the endeavour of the general collective evolution to arrive at an order in which not only the individual finds an environment to support and promote his self-growth but equally he contributes his share in the development of his greater body—the community which is intended to formulate and put forth the characteristic power of the manifesting Godhead that underlies and seeks expression in that particular collective form.

The nation, however, points out Sri Aurobindo, is not the culmination of the progressive evolutionary advance in the race; it is only the middle term, a significant junction to stabilise and coordinate the evolutionary gains of the individual and those of the collectivity of which he is the immediate member. A still larger movement is afoot; it aims to gather up all the diverse nation units and weld them into an organic whole. Nature has been experimenting with a variety of moulds for this purpose; she has released into operation a number of forces which cut across the boundaries of nations and emphasise the oneness of all human beings. The thought of man has accepted the necessity of transcending the barriers of nationality and growing into a supra-national climate in which alone each people could achieve

the fullest unimpeded growth and arrive at a common fulfilment in Harmony and Peace. The problem is, indeed, to evolve a form of world unity which assures the smooth coordination and commingling of the life impulses of all the member units in a common pool of collective progress but at the same time leaves sufficient scope for the free development of their characteristic ways of life and thought in a manner that answers to the demands of variegated Nature.

Various forms for embodying this supra-national Idea are being tentatively tried e.g. the empire, commonwealth, federation of states, confederacies and Unions of one-minded peoples. If the attempts have not been attended with glowing results, it is not due to lack of truth or strength in the Idea. It is because of want of a central sincerity in the approach which is still governed by individual and national ego. Besides, the problem is being met only on its superficies. Most of the steps of unification and integration so far developed and applied have only served to provide the externals of the beginnings of a world-order. They were indispensable, but they could go no further. There is need of a life-spirit to be breathed into the effort. The organisation has to be enlivened into an organism, the body has to be infused with a soul. And this, Sri Aurobindo declares, is possible only from the level of the soul. Men and nations have to accept their hearts and effectively recognise the right of each unit, single or aggregate, to be free, its right of liberty to develop itself according to its natural line of progress but consistent with the equal right of others to develop likewise ; it can be possible only if the mind of the humanity wakes to the depths of its own consciousness where each perceives and realises its unity with others, its commonalty of purpose, commonalty of feeling and thought and action with the rest—in a word, open to a Spiritual Religion of Humanity.

II

Indeed, this truth of the basic oneness of mankind is not

a new concept. In fact it found its voice millenniums ago in the call of the ancient Aryan Rishi :

> Join together, speak one word, let your minds arrive at one knowledge even as the ancient gods arriving at one knowledge partake each of his own portion.
>
> Common Mantra have all these, a common gathering to union, one mind common to all, they are together in one knowledge.
>
> One and common be your aspiration, united your hearts, common to you be your mind,—so that close companionship may be yours.[1]

Only, this Truth-Idea that dawned naturally on the intuitive mind of that early age is yet to arrive at its fulfilment. It remained largely an Ideal till, in the eighteenth century, it precipitated itself, in part, in the imperative demands of the Time-spirit, Liberty, Equality and Fraternity. With whatever hesitations and procrastinations, with whatever professions and intentions, men have been obliged to accept and work this irresistible urge towards the goal of a common freedom, unity and brotherhood among all. This recognition has taken several forms of expression : Humanitarianism, Socialism, Democracy etc. The progress of Science and other branches of human Knowledge has brought the minds and bodies of men in the far-spread corners of the globe close to each other and humanity is well nigh on its way to becoming a One World. Oneness of progress, oneness of goal, oneness of well-being are being recognised and striven for in an increasing number of fields; points of friction, mostly political and economic, are steadily being reduced. True, these developments have not altered the situation very materially ; they have not prevented the backsliding of the human civilisation into atavistic movements twice during a life-time. What has been achieved is a series of mechanical unifications, not living unities ; liberty in name, not in substance ; a formal equalisation

[1] Rig Veda, X.191

of the opportunities, not a real equality in life; an association of interests, not a fellowship in fraternity. Yet an advance has been registered. What has been done so far in the external field has been a necessary preparation, a tentative framework for the coming edifice of Human Unity. Each attempt in this direction has contributed not only by its successes, however partial, but even by its failures. For each failure exposed some inherent weakness and goaded the striving mind towards a sounder attempt.

There is a growing recognition that the Statute, national or international, can only bring about an artificial physical unity. The unity of the body to be living and entire must be preceded by a unity in the mind and no mental unity can be lasting and effective unless it is based upon unity in the heart, not in the outer but in the deeper heart, upon union in the Soul, the divinity in man whence proceed all genuine movements of Love, Harmony and Brotherhood. It is also being increasingly realised that a white uniformity of life and mechanically regulated order is not the true way to ensure human progress. An underlying oneness and a commonalty of purpose but a living variation in the diversity of life is the mode of Mother Nature; that shall also be the way of the gathering humanity. The community of nations is slowly, but surely, moving towards such a large and flexible oneness[2] based upon the deeper impulses of the soul within, which shall ensure security and freedom to all the peoples, but at the same time leave ample room for the healthy growth of its constituents, individual and corporate, in the luxuriance of their expression of the manifesting Spirit.

M. P. PANDIT

[1] What precise form this World-Union may take, it is not possible to forecast at this juncture in the Time-process when so many potentialities, possibilities and accumulated forces of history are in the crucible of Destiny. But this much can be safely said : whatever the form or successive forms the experiment may take, no union can be lasting and wholesome unless it is a kind of world-federation of free nations in which none is subordinated to another and all have an equality of status irrespective of their size.

THE LIFE DIVINE

An Outline

Chapter XVII

The Progress to 'Knowledge—God, Man and Nature

SINCE the evolution starts from an involution of the Divine Existence in the inconscience of Matter, its secret process must be the progressive emergence of that Existence (which is also Consciousness and Delight). The first evolutionary form of Existence is Matter, where consciousness is yet involved. Consciousness first emerges as vital vibrations, as yet subconscient. Consciousness in life appears first as the Ignorance, achieving a primary mental perception and a vital awareness; but it labours to manifest through sensation its inherent delight of being, which appears first as partial pain and pleasure. In Man Consciousness appears as Mind, aware of itself and things, but as yet limited.

Man's aim must be to enlarge his partial being and consciousness into an integral consciousness, and become a universalised individuality. All that is erroneous and ignorant in his mentality has to be transformed in order to arrive at a luminous knowledge. And therefore he must grow into a larger consciousness. The inner is the real Man that must become the master of himself and his environment. It is thus that the natural man evolves into the divine Man.

The knowledge we have to grow into is not the surface mind's idea of knowledge, some mental conception about God and ourselves and the world. Knowledge, as in ancient Indian thought, is a consciousness which possesses the highest Truth : and to be

the Highest is the sign that we have the knowledge. Therefore intellectual notions of truth cannot be the ultimate aim. To grow into our true being—that of the Divine Nature—is our real aim.

We have to see the root of our existence as the Divine Existence, a part of that Consciousness and born of that Delight. This is not what our surface mind sees. It is still a limited ego, an ignorance turning to knowledge, and a will and desire seeking for power and the delight of existence. We have to become ourselves by exceeding ourselves, exceeding the ego and possessing our real being.

Intellectual knowledge and practical action are steps towards a greater consciousness. But there are other instruments of our consciousness and energy than mental knowledge. Our one object is to increase our awareness of self and things, and to express this realisation dynamically. All man's highest efforts have been steps in this endeavour of Nature to arrive at the divine universality and express that in the individual being and consciousness. This is what the ancient seers of the Veda meant by the Knowledge.

But man, by the very limitation of his nature, must move step by step, obscurely and ignorantly at first. He is aware of diversity before he can reach unity; and this diversity revolves on three categories : the individual, God and Nature. Man is aware of himself as an apparently separate existence, and yet inseparable from the collectivity and the universal nature. He knows what is outside himself only by his mind and senses. He sees himself as of the same Nature, and yet different. Each being seems to be separate, and yet impelled by the same movement. He also divines something else which seems separate from the world and yet which he knows only through himself. It seems an invisible Reality and occult Infinite.

This third category he calls God, the Supreme, the Divine who is the perfection and the totality, and at the same time the Unknown. In spite of the fact that man has tried to deny the

reality of these three categories,—his own existence, the existence of cosmos and the existence of God,—yet there is the constant urge to know them and to arrive at the oneness of these three terms. It is in search of this unity that he might affirm only himself as cause, or only Nature, or only God. But such exclusive oneness cannot satisfy the entire problem. Least of all can he exclude God, for this is contrary to the eternal Witness in man himself.

Man is not a separate being and he cannot be the explanation of cosmos. Neither is Cosmos sufficient to itself, for this cannot explain the unseen forces. Man is compelled to realise the ultimate Oneness by which world-forces and himself are supported. He experiences this Oneness as an Infinite which holds all finites in an interrelated harmony. He feels the need of such an Absolute, on which all relativities depend. Ultimately man must arrive at this Supreme, Divine, Cause, Infinite, Perfection which is the All.

But yet the Absolute cannot be affirmed without cosmos and the individual. Cosmos is not a non-existent anomaly, a paradox, or a huge play of blind Energy. The energy that has manifested itself in the world and in man seeks a satisfying fulfilment. Mind seeks the linking factor to fulfil Nature in man, man in Nature, and both in God.

The realisation of their unity gives the knowledge of the entirety of these three categories; and for this each must be known in its completeness. Man must enlarge his knowledge of himself, his knowledge of the world and his knowledge of God until he becomes aware of their oneness.

We have to see, however, that God exists in Himself, and not by virtue of cosmos or of man; rather cosmos and man—a manifest action of God's Power—exist by virtue of Him. Individuals are but the extension of the Divine in multiplicity; and therefore it is through the knowledge of self that man arrives at the knowledge of God; or he may arrive at this knowledge through the universe. But arriving through himself alone he

loses the universe; and through the universe alone he becomes merely a channel of the cosmic Energy. Only through the integrality of both does he seize on all aspects of the Divine, possessing and possessed by the Divine. By an ascension into the supramental nature and the descent of its powers into the manifestation can this Divine possession become effective in the earth-nature.

In man's evolutionary development he has first to possess firmly and completely his own individuality. This is the egoistic phase, where all things, including God, exist only for the satisfaction of his desires, needs and ambitions. Here man finds his own individuality and disengages it from the lower subconscient mass consciousness. It is the affirmation of Man the individual against Nature, in order to be master of his world.

In the evolutionary emergence there is a secret cosmic consciousness which remains subliminal and an individual consciousness manifests on the surface. This latter organises the mind and life of the individual being; while side by side there develops a group mind, which is not effective, however, without the individual consciousness. For it is through the individual that the cosmic spirit organises its collective units and at the same time raises Nature from Inconscience to Superconscience. The mass by itself is half-formed and subliminal, and tends to suppress the individual. The mass consciousness can be effective when an individual leads or organises it,—or if it centres its activity around a tradition, group or head. Yet there is a growing consciousness of mind and soul which seeks an ever-widening expression and fulfilment.

The growth of the soul depends on the individual. While the collectivity is the field, the individual is the creator. The individual in his outer action is a cell of the mass body, but by going inward he can find himself and become spiritually one with all. This is the true individuality that must be developed and strengthened. The collective body tends to fix traditions; it is chiefly the individual who propels the evolutionary move-

ment. The ego, in fact, is a means by which the individual can disengage himself from the inconscience or subconscience of the mass. The individual is a fact of the cosmic being, but he is also a soul descended from the Transcendence.

The mental and vital ego which seeks action is but the first stage. Man, however, seeks to know himself, and this knowledge is beyond the ego. He studies his own psychology and sees the need for a wider explanation of things. He studies Nature and mankind in order to discover his unity with the rest of the world. Or he may seek the supernature, or God, and realise his unity with the Divine. Mostly he attempts both paths.

All the time he is seeking to fulfil himself; mastery of the world or individual salvation are steps towards this. Individual self-knowledge and action are means to his realised individuality. This is not merely an expanded egoism; behind it is the spiritual individual.

The Divinity in the individual means that perfection can manifest in the individual. It is the individual's surrender to the Supreme which brings the abolition of the ego and the experience of a wider consciousness. Yoga is nothing but the joining of the individual being with its vast, all-transcending unity of existence. This is the true self which is One with the Supreme.

Higher self-knowledge begins when one has expanded one's consciousness beyond the surface awareness. One then seeks to know the immortality of the soul; and further to know the inner and higher levels of one's being. A third step then is to find the immutable self and spirit, and thus discover God, the transcendent Self and Absolute, and the cosmic Self, behind Nature. Thus the ignorance of one's self and one's nature diminishes.

With increasing knowledge he discovers the unity of these three categories : that his manifest being is one with cosmos and Nature; but behind all this he is one with God. He thus finds his unity with all other souls and beings, and the vaster unity of God and Nature. He finds that the Absolute has become

all relativities, and the Self all becomings. He realises the Power of being (Shakti) as Nature acting in the cosmos.

By this knowledge of the universe—Nature as Matter, and Force and Life—man realises the relation of mental consciousness with these principles; and he discovers the one Consciousness in diverse forms. He realises a Supernature who is, beyond Time and Space, a conscious Power of the Self. It is this Power —of the Knowledge-Will of the Divine Lord—who manifests all relativities.

Man's quest for God begins with a sense of the unseen, both in himself and in Nature. Even the primitive religions express an obscure, ignorant feeling of the hidden influences and forces, of the invisible behind the visible. It is the same quest in Science itself which aims at a more luminous vision of the Truth. God is at first an anthropomorphic image, because He is one with humanity. But beyond this man discovers that God is his greater Self everywhere, the Reality of all existence.

Behind all the diversity of human religions and philosophies is the one Truth. The material world may be the body of the Divine; life the breath of His existence; or cosmic Mind or Spirit the creator and source of all; but we see in the end that He is all these at once and beyond,—a supreme Power, Love, Wisdom, the Lord of Nature or the universal Mother. Man must incessantly pursue Him and ultimately know Him as the one Divine Infinite to whom there are an endless variety of approaches. When knowledge reaches its highest aspect we arrive at the greatest unity, where all religions are approaches to a single Truth, all philosophies view-points of a single Reality, all Sciences part of a supreme Science. The most integral knowledge is found in the unity of God and man and Nature.

The Absolute is the timeless Self and the Self possessing Time, the creator of all and immanent in all existences. The same Absolute is the Spirit embodied in cosmic Mind, Life and Matter. All that Nature creates is a manifestation of Spirit; for it is the Self-Being that has become all becomings.

The high goal of humanity is only known through this triune knowledge,—of God, of man's soul and of Nature, and the Conscious unity of Nature with man's own consciousness. This is the basis of man's ascent to a divine consciousness and a divine life.

N. PEARSON

REVIEWS

Otto Wolff: **Indiens Beitrag zum neuen Menschenbild**, Rowohlt, publisher, Hamburg. 1957.

This booklet, which is the latest in a series : *German Encyclopaedia in Pocket-book Form*, edited by Professor Grassi of the University of Munich, gives us : *India's Contribution to a New Image of Man.* The author studied theology and philosophy in Greifswald, Berlin and Tübingen Universities, and wrote his doctor's thesis on the German reformer Martin Luther. After teaching in Germany and South America, he was called by the Indian Government to Banaras where he reorganized several institutes of the Hindu University and was principal of two of its colleges. Since his return to Germany two years ago he has been teaching in the Theological Faculty of Marburg University. He has an extensive knowledge of modern Hinduism and has felt specially attracted to Sri Aurobindo. He is now editing the principal works of Sri Aurobindo in German. His latest book (1957) is an anthology (in German) : *Thus Speaks Sri Aurobindo.*

In the first part of his book Otto Wolff introduces Sri Ramakrishna in the words of Sri Aurobindo :

> "It was when the flower of the educated youth of Calcutta bowed down at the feet of an illiterate Hindu ascetic, a self-illuminated ecstatic and 'mystic' without a single trace or touch of the alien thought or education upon him, that the battle was won."

Of Sri Ramakrishna Sri Aurobindo says :

> "He wins that battle and yet it is he paradoxically who never fights, who can't even fight because there is nothing against whom he could possibly fight, since God is all."

This chapter is illustrated throughout by a skilful selection of Ramakrishna's delightful stories which show, behind their child-like guise, his deep insight into man, the universe and God.

"But then", the author asks, "does this ecstatic, this man enraptured by the love of God, who comes from the most central part of religious experience, speak to the modern world ?" and the answer is : "He is the great holy man of the pious in the country, and the social and evangelistic Hinduism of modern times refers to him. But although he is recognised as the builder of a bridge from the old to the new...it is only in Sri Aurobindo that Ramakrishna's inner path will emerge into the present, in a new way and on a higher level, as a powerfully announced possibility, coming into close contact with the spirit of our changed world and its radically altered state of consciousness. Only now, Sri Aurobindo assures us, will the impulse which came from the saint of Dakshineshwar become fully effective in the modern world. Thus Sri Ramakrishna does not remain in past history ; he becomes a moving force.

"As India turns towards the new era, Ramakrishna, by the force of his being, represents the great esoteric heritage of her spiritual path. This he lays upon her as an inescapable duty. An India incapable of that truth, or irresponsibly trying to by-pass it, would lose her roots."

The last part of the booklet : "Sri Aurobindo, the Announcer of the Supraconscious", opens with the words of Dr. Prabhat Sanyal as he stood at the deathbed of Sri Aurobindo :

"My hands were still on His forehead. My mind wandered. He lay, my Guru, Rishi Sri Aurobindo, Avatar of the new era of the dawn, a thing past ! Only a few seconds ago I was watching and hoping for a miracle to happen ; could there be a more appropriate time than this ? Sri Aurobindo is no more ! He was alive, and now He is history."

The author then goes on to quote K.M. Munshi, S.K. Maitra, and R.R. Diwakar and others about their experience of Sri Aurobindo.

"This evidence", he continues, "shows that Sri Aurobindo has far transcended the usual limits of human consciousness the unheard—of spiritual adventure to which this life was dedicated, each minute of it concentrated on pushing the limits of human consciousness outward in order to fulfil and enlarge our spiritual possibility and in order to make possible a new and higher type of man. On the modern human level reformations and reforms can have no value because man in himself has no value. On his exhausted level of consciousness man has become uncreative. What is in question is not religious culture or a new spiritual aim, it is man himself, unfinished and fragmentary, and the ideal toward which he is striving is not to be found in a religion or a philosophy because the true man in the full sense of the word is the yet unknown man. And it is Aurobindo, representing mankind, who takes that next step into evolution. He does not take that step by projecting a new prophecy in the style of an Indian Nietzsche, but by realizing it in his own person. And as Gandhi could say that the truth for which he lived was as old as the mountains, so Sri Aurobindo makes the pilgrimage to the dawning truth of tomorrow, the first rays of which are just coming up behind the mountains."

"In this sense Aurobindo understands himself, and this knowledge of self is not a titanic self-transcendance; its justification is demonstrated by his leaving the body, which he explains in *Savitri* (Book 6, Canto 2):

> "He who has found his identity with God
> Pays with the body's death his soul's vast light.
> His knowledge immortal triumphs by his death."

The events accompanying Sri Aurobindo's passing are described in detail, and the author concludes that Sri Aurobindo's advance into the supersensual and the superconscious has not remained paper theory or hypothetical speculation, but aims at a methodically progressive experience, practice and effective realization.

After a general introduction to Sri Aurobindo's teaching, the author gives us a short biography. In a chapter which is called "The Lotus and the Dagger", he speaks about his early life :

"Sri Aurobindo studied the revolutions and the rebellions leading to national freedom, the fight against the English in medieval France, and the revolutions which liberated America and Italy. Thus he became 'the most dangerous man of Bengal', an extremist and a rebel." In the chapter "The Extremist" Mr. Wolff tells us the history of the "*Bande Mataram*," the Surat Congress, and the organization of secret terrorist groups throughout the country. The chapter entitled "Vasudeva Auditions and Visions of Alipore" begins with :

"The doors of the prison closed behind Sri Aurobindo, but the dams which had confined him broke."

In "The Final Guidance" he tells about the sudden commands to go to Chandernagore and Pondicherry. The author describes the meeting of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, and quotes Sri Aurobindo :

> "It is difficult for the ordinary mind to imagine an existence which, although still human, is, so far as it concerns our destined conditions, radically changed." (retranslated from the German)

"These words might be applied to the Mother, who lives constantly on such a level of consciousness that it becomes a

living certainty that much of what we are not but might be is actually possible. It becomes understandable, too, that in this community of more than a thousand people, including Americans, English, French, Germans and other Westerners, the overwhelming experience is that spirit is not merely idea and principle but reality—creative, dynamic and transforming power. The Sri Aurobindo Ashram is her work. An ashram is traditionally a monastic hermitage with the ascetic, the guru, in the centre. But the ashram in Pondicherry is as dissimilar as possible to this traditional idea." He lists its various departments as proof of this, and points out that there are no sacrifices, no adoration of idols, no temple; and no new religion is announced. He quotes Sri Aurobindo :

"I am not here to convert anyone; I do not preach to the world to come to me and I call no one. I am here to establish the divine life and the divine consciousness in those who of themselves feel the call to come to me and cleave to it and in no others."

In describing Sri Aurobindo's yoga in later chapters, the author writes :

"The yoga of Sri Aurobindo is new, above all, because it is carried by an elementary new impulse of being. Aurobindo is the first modern yogi, because in him the life-feeling of modern man comes to the front. Therefore he has become a revolutionary in the spiritual domain. On a central religious field he breaks the spiritual limits of 'medieval' India more radically than anyone before him. Therefore the traditional piety of India stands frightened and confused before the phenomenon—Aurobindo."

World affirmation, as a first elementary motive, both Ramakrishna and Gandhi attempted; but neither could overcome the asceticism which hates and fears the world. This only Sri Aurobindo was able to accomplish. In an ever greater measure

he is awakening the interest of the political leaders of India who, coming from a background of world negation, have to build up a modern state with a positive ethic of work. In Pondicherry there is no monastic meditation. Work in the world is yoga. Everybody works according to his personal fitness. Yoga is work in the world.

"It is part of the truth of the human being to understand man as a being in evolution. This characteristic trait in the thought of Sri Aurobindo is not to be disposed of as an echo of Bergson and Darwin, but is throughout a crowning characteristic and heavy with the future....Transformation means a creative act of being. Sri Aurobindo has nothing to do with old dogmatic, monistic thoughts of evolution that explain the development from amoeba through monkey to man. There is no such rigid unbroken chain, explains Sri Aurobindo, because Supermind intervenes constantly and creatively. It is just such a new conception of evolution which has penetrated into biology, zoology, anthropology and medicine, that man has something special which is not absolutely deducible, and which insists on an open structure in view of a possible further evolution."

The author points out that researchers like Rhine and Carington have experimentally found the so-called occult and psychic faculties not para-normal but belonging to every human being. "This does not enter at all into the level of the supramental, but into the supramental instruments which Sri Aurobindo has described and which therefore no longer seem impossibilities. Seen from here, Sri Aurobindo's yogic accomplishment practically and existentially fulfilled is a magnificent contribution to various sciences which, in their way and in the frame of their possibilities, confirm Sri Aurobindo throughout."

An interesting observation of the author is that the dynamic expansive Hinduism which preponderantly presents the Vedantic, impersonal mystic of the East, has not yet started to concern itself

with these eminent representatives, these true movers of the new Hinduism. "The future does not belong to Vivekananda's *Vedanta* interpreted in a western way; nor is S. Radhakrishna's sub-personal apologetic of Hinduism to be the future world religion. It is Ramakrishna who is the true modern teacher, whose personal love of God shows the right way because it teaches personal self-becoming. 'I would not be here if the realization of the impersonal were sufficient', says Aurobindo laconically to his disciples."

Otto Wolff as a Protestant theologian meets Sri Aurobindo on a strictly super-religious level, and he is open enough and sufficiently qualified by his intimacy with Indian life and Indian spirituality to introduce Sri Aurobindo to the German people and awaken their interest in his existence and thought. He sums up his understanding of Sri Aurobindo's teaching with the following sentences :

"Sri Aurobindo is the deepest and most universal phenomenon which modern India has produced. And it is not only Indians who see in him the last arch of a bridge of human thought and endeavour which leads from the Vedic beginnings to the present, and transcends the ordinary limits of human consciousness."

Professor Wolff has made a positive contribution to the understanding of Sri Aurobindo, and the reaction of German Protestant Christianity will be interesting to watch. This little book will be a landmark in the history of the coming "Renaissance", and the beginning of a new chapter in the phenomenon —Aurobindo.

MEDHANANDA

II

The Talks of Sadguru Upasani-Baba Maharaj, Vol. I, 'The Selected Talks'. Translated and compiled by Godama-Suta. Published by Dr. Sahasrabudhe, Nagpur 1. Price Rs. 7.50.

This volume is a collection of Selections from Sri Upasani Baba's Talks—published and unpublished. It is divided into four sections on the basis of the sources from which the talks have been selected. These talks were, as the Preface tells us, "addressed to the devotees—mostly men of the world,—the businessmen, clerks, villagers, womenfolk, etc. " "His style," the Preface continues, "explanations and examples were such that any commoner was able to grasp the most difficult and abstruse points. These talks were no lectures or discourses; they were not pre-planned; no particular subject was taken up. As the devotees worshipped him one by one, he went on talking to them."

The talks cover a wide range of spiritual field and throw revealing light on each topic that is dealt with. The nature of God, His transcendence and immanence, His formlessness and forms, the truth of the Advaita and that of Dvaita, the nature of the soul, its ignorance and bondage and its means of liberation, the state of 'knowing' and 'not-knowing', the state of Jivanmukta, the Satpurusha, the nature of the world, Prakriti and its Gunas, the significance of religion, the conflict of religions, the significance of the Avatars,—these are some of the important problems which Sri Baba discusses with his disciples in a simple yet direct style and speaks on them in words which bear the stamp of the authority of experience and realisation. Quite often, he gives illustrations from his own life, his own struggles of the period of Sadhana, and his status as Jivanmukta. These stories are very interesting, instructive and give a deeper understanding of the teacher.

Another important feature is the knowledge of occult matters which Sri Baba has expounded at certain places. Thus he speaks of the City of the Dead, of Dreams and their significance, of the knowledge of past lives, etc. Some of the stories of his past lives are revealing and they are told for the purpose of instruction.

The whole book makes a very useful reading for anyone interested in spirituality. Sri Baba's chief emphasis is on the direct experience of Reality rather than on any particular religion ; thus he belongs to the modern spiritual movement and his teachings will therefore have a special appeal to the present-day spiritual aspirant.

K. M. J